



FEATURES IN TECHNICAL WRITING WITH A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SCHOLARLY ARTICLES

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ABSTRACT

Scholarly publications urge for technical writing. A technical writer's primary intension is to communicate specific information to the exact audience in the clearest and most effective manner possible. The writings include executive summary of statements, reports, briefs, scholarly articles, theses, etc. When the intention is to submit an article for publication in a journal, we often put forward a specific set of objectives for the purpose. Knowing of characteristics of technical writing is very important for them who are interested in such writing. Articles are written by such authors who have expertise over the subject. An article has to be pact in all respects and check points. A research paper is easier to write when it is broken down into distinct elements. Style manual provides a set of standards for designing and writing of documents, either for general use or for a specific publication. Previously chances for scholarly publications were very less than the nowadays opportunities, even for online publications. Besides many advantages, online publications undergo a few disadvantages. Now it has been entirely changed environment in information communication and non-print media is dominating. It is to witness many more in future

KEYWORDS: Article Writing; Scholarly Article; Style Guide; Style Manual; Technical Writer; Technical Writing.

INTRODUCTION

Since the ancient civilization, there have been scholarly writers producing intellectual contents for the posterity and societal benefit. Such scholarly publications are the outputs of sincere thinkers in their field of intellectual activities, and sometimes associated with their adjacent subjects or disciplines. The scholarly publications urge for technical writing. Technical writing requires expertise and it has been a craft that aims to provide technical, business or educational information. Technical writings are the most widely read form of written communication happening around in world. Literature is actually flourished in two ways, creative writing and technical writing. We therefore mention some form of the writings as medical literature, scientific literature, technical literature, and so on. We may consider all the educational textbooks as the forms of technical writing. A technical writer must have a certain kind of creative skill with a convinced level of scholarship. Technical writings are commonly unexciting creations. A good technical writer must therefore come up with a way to engage the intended audience to take interest on assimilation of information. Technical writing is possibly more difficult than other forms of writings, and because of the fact, it must be clear-cut, unambiguous and to the point. A good technical writing should not leave any room for imagination and thereafter divergence. These are produced on the requirement of societal development, cultural or scientific or for any particular purpose, not for any sort of recreation, as required in creative writing. For the beginners, to write a subject technically may be considered a harder task, as ideas come jumbled, in a disorderly manner. In order to seek guidance and to acquire confidence, scholars may require and acquire some kind of systematic approach.

Technical Writing

Technical writing¹ is always accomplished by a technical writer or scholarly author. It is the process of writing so as to share scholarly information in professional, educational and research

settings in natural science or social science. A technical writer's primary intension is to communicate specific information to the exact audience in the clearest and most effective manner possible. The information that technical writers communicate is often so complicated that strong writing and communication skills are essential. Technical writings² are required in wide variety of documents. It is a sort of writing or drafting of technical communication used in technical and occupational fields, such as computer science, engineering, chemistry, aeronautics, robotics, finance, medical science, biotechnology, physics, forestry, biology and so on.³ Today technical writing encompasses all sorts of documentations of complex technical processes⁴. It includes reports, executive summary of statements, briefs, case studies, scholarly articles, theses, etc. It is to define⁵, "Technical writing is a type of writing where the author is writing about a particular subject that requires direction, instruction, or explanation. This style of writing has a very different purpose and different characteristics than other writing styles such as creative writing, academic writing or business writing."

Purpose of Technical Writing

Every type of writing is initiated to secure a goal⁶. Technical writing is not an exception as well. The main purpose of technical writing is to provide a composite information to readers in a way that they can be able to easily understand and apply, even if they don't have prior knowledge of the topic or subject. When our intention is to submit an article for publication in a journal, we often set a specific set of objectives for the purpose⁷. The purpose of a technical may therefore be summarized as the followings⁸:

- Technical writing explains how a particular vision may work in order to complete a task or project;
- It is intended for the readers who are looking for information on a particular topic with detailed specifications;

- Technical writing would introduce a subject precisely, in a comprehensive manner. It must be clear, concise and easily understandable for the target audience who will follow and use the information;
- It may be written to inform new ideas, so that the intended viewers may acquire knowledge to extract its societal or scientific benefits;
- Technical writing is required to inform hypotheses or theories, to describe important information, to explain findings, to reject misconceptions, or for a variety of such other purposes;
- It may create a chance to gain a deeper and enriched understanding of a problem or may offer an opportunity to formulate new ideas from the old ones;
- Finally, to persuade, to convince readers to take interest for an action, to change their attitudes or behaviors based on valid opinions and evidences existed in writings.

FEATURES IN TECHNICAL WRITING

Awareness of the different characteristics in technical writing⁹ is crucial for them who are interested in such writing professionally and proficiently.¹⁰ Technical writing has certain characteristics which distinguish it from other types of writings. It is very different from of writing, other than composition of essays, prose, fiction, etc. The aim of technical writing is to interpret valuable information in a comprehensive way. The information may cover social science or natural science or technology. Activity for publication of an educational textbook is also a form of technical writing. The features of technical writing may be stated as the followings:

Clarity of thought

It is essential that a technical writer fairly understands the reader's background and needs. The document is meaningless unless the intended audience cannot not understand what the writer wants to communicate.

Accuracy

Accuracy is an important feature in any technical document. A slightest mistake may undergo a grave consequence. Effective communication requires quality content in a lucid language that is further accurate.

Straightforwardness

This type of writing is always to be straightforward. It implies for the communicable information to be frank, straightforward and to the point, without exerting any sort of hindrance in order to use the same.

Detailed and precise

Technical writing is to be detailed, informative and precise; therefore expressing nothing for imaginary thoughts. The perfect example of technical writing is a textbook, irrespective of subjects. Most of the textbooks describe subject matter as fully as possible, as far the production costing.

Systematic presentation

Technical writing is to be well structured and sequentially presented. This type of writing needs to follow a style for its composition that makes it easy for readers to follow all along.

Problem-solving

Technical documents should be generated for the purpose of solution of any problem. Readers have to use these documents to learn how to perform certain task for solution of the problem.

MEASURES FOR ARTICLE WRITING AND ITS PUBLICATION

Articles are usually written by such authors who themselves have competence over the subject. An article has to be pact in all respects and followings may be the check points associated with such work¹¹:

Systematic: Information in an article is sequentially expressed, step by step, in different sections and thereafter in subsections. Information is to be precise with accuracy or precision;

Language: The article is essentially written in English, because it is considered the foremost form for scientific communication internationally. Besides, everyone is interested in communicating the established knowledge widely to the international community;

Well written: Sentences are to be well phrased and easily understood, even by a general reader. Article writing therefore necessitates professional knowledge with use of exact vocabularies for proper comprehension.

Enriched text: Text of the article is to be comprehensive and well understandable. Therefore, tables, maps, photographs, graphs, charts, etc. are to be accordingly inserted within the text;

Proper referencing: It is to ensure that the citations are correct and complete. Further the references are well written according to a standard bibliographic format or style manual, as asked in 'Call for papers' or 'Instructions to authors';

Finalization of title and abstract: Many changes may undergo during editing and refinement processes which commonly go before submission of an article. It is therefore to be assured that the title and abstract for the article ultimately match with its final version;

Rereading of instructions: Finally one sincere writer has to reread the instructions given for the authors, concerning word-limit, margin, font-size, font-type, capitalization, paragraph, etc. It is therefore to finally check in all respects;

Well focused: Submission of an article requires proper knowledge about the dependent journal or edited book or the conference to be held and their coverage so that the article will be well focused among the intended audience;

Indexed: Before submission of an article, it is to know whether the target publication comes under indexing and abstracting services or is covered by annotated bibliographies, nationally or internationally.

SEQUENCE OF ELEMENTS IN ARTICLE WRITING

A research paper is easier to write when it is broken down into distinct elements¹² and spread in succession¹³. Following are the elements which are sequentially kept in writing an article¹⁴.

Title

Title summarizes the main idea or ideas in writing an article. A good title contains the fewest necessary words that adequately describe the contents or purpose of the article. A title is vital aspect and it is usually read at the first sight. Title would be attention drawing in real sense.

Author(s) and affiliation(s)

Title of an article is immediately followed by author's names with their affiliations. Affiliation implies institute's name where the author belongs to. The affiliation is thereafter specified by department, full postal address and email address.

Abstract

An abstract is short summary of completed article¹⁵. It is intended to describe and thereafter convince the article without going into great detail. Abstracts should be self-contained and concise on explaining the work as briefly and clearly as possible.

Keywords

Keywords are important words or phrases or concepts which are found within the text of the article. Use of keywords to search the article will always result in retrieving similar other articles, equally desired.

The text

Text is extended from 'Introduction' to 'Conclusion'. It contains several sections and subsections in several paragraphs. As far as possible, the text should be written in active voice and present tense. Long and complicated sentences should be avoided. Technical jargons, redundancies, etc. should also be avoided. Salient facts and features may be presented using bullets, icons, or special typography. The text would be supported by tables, images, maps, illustrations, formulas, etc., wherever necessary. In writing a conclusion drawn from several facts, it is required to summarize all the facts firstly, and to phrase the actual conclusion in the last.

Note or endnote

Such 'Note' in a scholarly article is not always required. It occurs if any special mention is required. One may mention exceptional facts undergone. Such note may contain any special mention of gratitude. It may seek corrigendum, feedback, etc.

References

There would be mention of references in any standard bibliographic format, or as per a style manual. There are two widely used referencing-style-manuals which are 'APA Style' of American Psychological Association; and 'AMA Manual of Style' of American Medical Association.

Appendix

Appendix is not an essential element in article writing. It is a tacked section which provides supplementary information like questionnaires, additional references, some reports, or the similar information which are not logically adjusted within the text, but referred therein. An appendix does not include charts, graphs, sketches, tables, etc.

USE OF STYLE MANUAL

A style manual¹⁶ or style guide is introduced or published to inform a set of standards for designing and writing of documents, either for general use or for a specific publication or for organizational publication. Style guides are prevalent for both general use and specialized use, for students and for scholars. Style guides are not intended to teach how to write, but they were introduced in order to present a written document in a consistent format, for its better comprehension. Following is an assorted list of style manuals¹⁷:

Style manuals	Introducer/ Publisher	Purpose
<i>ACS Style Guide</i>	American Chemical Society	Citation writing in academic publications
<i>AMA Manual of Style</i>	Oxford Univ. Press for American Medical Asso.	Writing, editing and citation in AMA journals
<i>APA Style</i>	American Psychological Association	Article writing and book writing
<i>The ASA Style Guide</i>	American Sociological Association	Research paper writing in sociology
<i>The Bluebook</i>	Harvard Law Review Association, [et al.]	Legal citation writing
<i>The Chicago Manual of Style</i>	University of Chicago Press	Writing in American English

<i>Citing Medicine</i>	United States National Library of Medicine	Writings in MedLine and PubMed
<i>IEEE style</i>	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers	Writing research papers in technical field
<i>ISO 690</i>	International Organization for Standardization	Bibliographic references in print and e-publications
<i>MHRA Style Guide</i>	Modern Humanities Research Association	For authors, editors, and theses in arts and humanities
<i>MLA Handbook</i>	Modern Language Association of America	Citations in research paper writing

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTICLE SUBMISSION

Previously chances for article publications were very less than the nowadays opportunities. These were commonly: (a) article submission for a journal; (b) article submission for a conference proceeding; and (3) article submission for an edited book. Nowadays article submission through online mode is a vast opportunity in consideration to reach wider audience, i.e. to maximize the reach, even eventually for the online publications. Now scholars can submit their articles for publications in national as well as in international journals comfortably. While the information is available online, it is not at all bewildering in accessing the desired information. Open access publications undergo some advantages as well as disadvantages¹⁸. These may be stated as the followings.

Advantages of Open Access Publication

1. The greatest benefit of open access is that it enables the results of a scholarly research to be disseminated more rapidly among the wider audience;
2. More people can read the results of scholarly research, including those who were otherwise unable to access the information, because they cannot afford the subscriptions to the expensive journals.
3. New ideas can be dispersed more rapidly, which in turn guide to new research. It gives a momentum in development of knowledge among the learned society.
4. Scientific research shows that publishing in open access has worldwide visibility without barriers, leading to more citations and exerting more impact.
5. Open access publications allow fair chance to reuse. Therefore such a publications can be put to immediate use in teaching, as the open educational resources or e-resources.

Disadvantages of Open Access Publication

1. The number of high-quality and fully open access journals varies across the disciplines. Some disciplines have very few or less number of journals;
2. Publishing in open access journals sometimes involves additional system of registration, whereas submission of articles to traditional journals can be easily done, just through emails;
3. Sometimes submission of valuable information online is not safe for a researcher. Sometimes a journal is dubious and predatory or substandard and published without following any guideline.

CONCLUSION

Technical writing is an academic blend of activities performed through linguistic ability; scholarship in discipline; and sense of aesthetics of systematic presentation. Such writing is an organized writing where a scholarly author is writing on a particular subject for exposition of a fact of altogether educational value that requires assimilation for societal benefit. This style of writing has different purposes and different characteristics than other writing styles required in creative writing. Writing of scholarly article also comes under technical writing. A scholarly article¹⁹ or research paper is written to put

forward a deliberate thought.²⁰ Such article writing is therefore a specific kind of writing that is written to reach a massive audience. It requires lot of intelligence and writing skills with a sense of systematic presentation. The primary vision of an author is to bring considerable difference in learned society by changing the views, scientific or societal. Now academic publishing world is undergoing major changes, as it is gradually adopting many transitions from the print version to electronic format. Business and beneficial models are also different in this electronic information environment. In open access, a journal article is made available free of cost for all on the web by the publisher at the time of publication. We shall be experiencing many more in the days to come.

NOTE

It has been tried to refer all the consulted documents under 'References', in APA style. In case any lacks, it is unintentional and sincerely apologetic. One may feel fully free for forwarding feedback to ramapal8421@gmail.com.

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